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August 20, 1961

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants

Governing Mayor Brandt  
Mayor Auehn  
Herr Alberts  
Dr. Walter Klein

Ambassador Dowling  
Ambassador Bohlen  
Mr. Lightner

Subject: Berlin Situation

Place of Meeting: The Mayor's Office in the Rathaus, Berlin

Date of Meeting: August 20, 1961

The Governing Mayor said that the Vice-President had brought with the President's greetings some important comments that he would like to mention. He noted that the increase in the garrison was not only symbolic but itself was a substantive answer to the demands of the other side for us to get out of Berlin. The Mayor said that the question of the Allies' asserting three-power responsibility for West Berlin had been raised. He believed it was important that this should be carried out in a way that did not prejudice our four-power position. The Mayor referred to the success of the Vice-President's visit but said that despite this boost the psychological shock resulting from what had happened last Sunday showed that fear of a weakening of the connections with the West could have a great effect on the morale of the people of West Berlin. Referring to the role and tasks of West Berlin in preparing for the future, the Mayor said that some days or weeks would be required to come up with some ideas. He welcomed the offer of the U.S. government to discuss new problems and their solution. The Mayor also noted that the question of referring to the U.N. the East Zone's violations of human rights in Berlin was also under study.

With respect to a plebiscite, which the President had also mentioned, Brandt said that this had been discussed here with representatives of the Federal Republic several weeks ago and the thought was that a proposal for a plebiscite for all of Germany might be useful at some time; it would of course be answered in the negative by the other side but then this might be followed by having a plebiscite in Berlin. Of course different questions would be asked for a Berlin plebiscite. In this connection Brandt mentioned that there was a draft law on the books

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Mayor Amrehn said that he regretted he had not been present during the conversation with the Vice-President in the morning. He felt that everybody in the city had been encouraged by the Vice-President's visit and by the arrival of the troops but he felt we should keep in mind why the Berliners were so discouraged after the events of August 13. It was not just because the sector border had been closed; there was a real fear that something would soon take place that would affect West Berlin's communications with the West. Mayor Amrehn felt that Mr. Bohlen's remarks failed to take into account that the Russians might soon take further steps. With respect to the question of making a declaration on the three-power status of West Berlin Mayor Amrehn felt this might be very dangerous as it could weaken the continuing basic and four-power status. Regarding the suggestions for referring matters to the U.N., Mayor Amrehn believed it should be possible to separate the Berlin problem from what has been happening in the Zone. The latter should be brought to the attention of the U.N. On the plebiscite he commented that while it might be possible for the three Allies to get some advantage prior to negotiations out of a Berlin plebiscite he thought that this advantage would be a small one as a result of what had happened last Sunday.

On the subject of counter-measures Mayor Amrehn said it was not clear to him why no other measures were considered possible. We were saving the economic measures for some more serious event but Mayor Amrehn doubted whether such measures would be strong enough if the access route to the West should be closed. What troubled him was that people were now asking: if no counter-measures are possible now, what will be done when the route to West Germany is closed? Mayor Amrehn believed it was possible that the traffic to the West might not be closed down suddenly but gradually, by a series of ever-increasing harassments and controls that would hamper free traffic but would not be severe enough to result in a closure. He believed it was important to plan carefully just what would be done in the circumstances. He mentioned increasing demands that the East had made in the last week, indicating that we might expect no let up. He referred to the GDR's demand that no Federal Republic flags be flown in West Berlin; that Federal Minister Lenner must go (which probably forebodes a demand that no Federal Minister be permitted to proceed to West Berlin). If things kept on, Mayor Amrehn predicted, there might be renewed uncertainty and uneasiness leading to a serious reduction in orders for Berlin industry and we might face a real problem.

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injected that the trouble was that if we took no counter-measures with respect to what was happening within Berlin the other side might be encouraged to take steps in other directions. In that connection he said he understood that a full trade embargo was contemplated if allied traffic were interfered with. This would take such a long time (three months) to become effective that the other side, said the Mayor, would not be likely to be impressed. Mr. Bohlen assured the Mayor that an embargo was only part of what might be done in those circumstances. In any case it would be possible to mount it in less than three months. He reiterated that it was useless to try to specify exactly in advance what would be done; that one difficulty in taking prompt action was the necessity for consultation with our Allies, but there was nothing that could be done about that. Mr. Bohlen pointed out that the President was determined not to permit any inroads affecting the three essential points referred to above, regarding maintaining Allied presence, Allied access and West Berlin's viability and contact with the West.

EALightnerJr.

Enclosure:

Mayor Brandt's comments on the Four Power status  
(translation of paper handed to Ambassador Dowling Aug. 20, 1961)

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